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Three Plays by Friedrich Hebbel. Introduction by L. H. ALLEN. Everyman's Library, 1914.

This translation is one of the various signs that the indifference of the English-reading public to Hebbel is at last giving way, and as such, as well as for its own sake, should be heartily welcome. It contains three plays, two translated by Mr. Allen of Sidney, N. S. W., the third, *Maria Magdalena*, by Barber Fairley.

Mr. Allen, with whom I am chiefly concerned here, chose *Herodes und Mariamne* and *Gyges und sein Ring*, which may be considered fortunate selections. He has attempted the difficult task of turning them into English blank verse, being guided, as he himself tells us in his Introduction, by the distinctive rhythm of the original, as far as he was able to attain this. Without going further into this feature of the translation, I will merely say that he seems to me to have succeeded well in his effort. It must be particularly difficult to translate Hebbel, both on account of the individuality of his single expressions, and the general complex movement of his larger groups. The peculiar inflexibility, expressed in his language no less than in his characters, the presence of beauty won from a conflict, the sense of depth, passion, and force, restrained but always there—such things belong to the atmosphere of his language, and can be found in no dictionary. It is in this phase of translating that Mr. Allen is well equipped. His work has little of mere routine about it. The amount of energy he has expended in finding adequate renderings is astonishing. His translation might pass for an original production in English. Conscientious interpretation of the text, according to the spirit, seems to have been his principle throughout. A few examples follow.

In the well-known lines where Kandaules, comparing skilful Greek with rough Lydian, speaks of the Greek influence as a net, cunningly woven but easy to break, he adds:

Und geh'n zu uns'rem eignen Spass hinein:
Ein kleiner Ruck macht uns ja wieder frei.
(ll. 111-12.)

The translation has:

And with a covert laugh we bungle in
Because a tiny fin-flick sets us free.

And these lines, all from *Gyges*, with translations immediately succeeding:

Dich hüten will ich, wie die treue Wimper
Dein Auge hütet. (ll. 1002-3.)
I will watch o'er you as the trusty lashes
Watch o'er your eye.

Und in dem falben Strahl der Abendsonne,
Der durch die Ritzen des Gemäuers drang,
Sah ich ein Wölkchen blassen Staubes schweben.
(ll. 168-70.)

And in the sickly shaft of westering sunlight
That pierced a passage through the chinked wall
I saw a wisp of pallid dust was swaying.

That fine line where Gyges explains his determination not to become visible in the Queen's chamber as coming from his desire to spare her

Die ewige Umschattung ihres Seins,

is translated by

The eternal crypt of shadow round her being.

And these lines from *Herod and Mariamne*:

Ein Sklav' stand hinter ihm, das Ohr gespitzt,
Die Tafel und den Griffel in der Hand,
Und zeichnete mit lächerlichem Ernst
Das auf, was ihm in trunk'nem Mut entfiel.
(ll. 163-66.)

A slave behind him with his ear acock,
A tablet and a stylus in his hand,
Was setting down—absurdly solemn owl!
Whatever crank escaped his tippler mood.

Not only is it difficult to translate Hebbel, it is not always easy to understand him. In respect of accuracy the translation deserves praise. Of Mr. Allen's work the *Gyges* seems to be better in this quality than the *Herod*. Only two or three errors came to my attention in the former, but more in the latter. Some of them follow.

Mariamne in explaining the envy of the weak for the strong (p. 103) says:

What has the slave for solace when the king
 In gorgeousness and glory sweeps him by
 Than this—to say, "He gets his turn like me!
 I grudge it not! And when he mounts his throne
 Fresh from a field o'erstrewn with graves in
 thousands
 I'll praise him for't: it chokes his covetous
 mood!"

Here the quotation marks, lacking in Hebbel, should end with "He gets his turn like me!" The next words are Mariamne's own, and "he" refers not to "king" but to "slave." The word translated "mount" is "*rücken an*," which could not mean that. It here means to "put" or "place," and the whole passage means: "If he (the slave) places the battle-field with its thousands of graves right next to the throne, I approve it, for that chokes his envy." (Cf. ll. 1095 ff.)

The deed I must accomplish,
 And that on both, or else endure them both.
 (p. 106.)

This should read: "The deed I must accomplish, and that on both, or else suffer it." The word rendered by "them" is "*sie*," and it refers to *Tat* of the line before. The speaker, Joseph, must either kill both Mariamne and Alexandra or be killed by them. (Cf. ll. 1183 ff.)

A somewhat difficult passage (p. 110), in which Mariamne reads the thoughts of Joseph from the expression of his face, seems to have been misunderstood, at least if we are to judge from one of its crucial lines:

Dann hätte ich an einen kalten Gruss
 Mich nie gekehrt—
 I had not turned me with a cold good-bye.

It is not quite clear what the English means. The German is plain. Mariamne says that Joseph is thinking: "I should not have worried about a cold greeting." That is, if Joseph had known that Mariamne would take her own life anyway, granting Herod's death, he would not have feared her and worried about her unkind treatment of him. (Cf. ll. 1289 ff.)

In her final conversation with Titus, Mariamne explains the necessity of her action in these words:

Wenn nichts als Trotz mich triebe, wie er meint,
 Der Schmerz der Unschuld hätt' den Trotz ge-
 brochen:
 Jetzt machte er nur bitterer mir den Tod.

Mr. Allen translates:

Naught but defiance drives me as he thinks;
 If so my guiltless smart had broke defiance
 And now 'twould mean a bitterer death.

The last two lines have been misunderstood. "*Der Schmerz der Unschuld*"—"the pain of innocence"—refers to the pain of her children in the everlasting farewell mentioned in the line before. The context shows that, and if there were any doubt at all, the variant reading given by Werner would dispel it. The line first read: "*Der Kinder Unschuld hätt' ihn schnell gebrochen*." The last line quoted from the translation should accordingly be: "Now it only made my death more bitter." (Cf. ll. 3090 ff.)

Herod, speaking to Joab, says:

Was Moses bloss gebot, um vor dem Rückfall
 In seinen Kälberdienst dies Volk zu schützen,
 Wenn er kein Narr war, das befolgt dies Volk,
 Als hätt' es einen Zweck an sich—

The translation is correct here except for the rendering of the words, very characteristic of Herod, "wenn er kein Narr war." Mr. Allen says, "though *he* was no fool." He gave himself unnecessary trouble with the conjunction, for the expression simply means, "if he was no fool." The sense of the passage is, that Moses, unless he was a fool, gave the Jews his precepts not as an end in themselves, but to protect them from idolatry. (Cf. ll. 149 ff.)

I will mention only one other passage in full. This consists of two lines from the Appendix, where certain passages from earlier versions are given. The lines formerly came after l. 828:

Es wär' genug den Cäsar zu bezahlen
 Und schätzt er selbst sich ab vorm Tode.

The "schätzt" here is an error of the translator for "*schätzt*," though this does not seem to have influenced his interpretation of the lines. Mr. Allen says in his note: "The words seem to mean 'The tribute would be enough to pay Caesar if he (Herod) were assenting to his own value to save himself from death.' The passage proved too much for me,

and I owe this explanation to Mr. Nicholson. I translate:

It were enough to quit his debt to Caesar
Were he himself to rate his worth 'gainst death."

This translation is plainly not correct. It is neither very plausible in itself nor does it square with the German. Again Werner gives a suggestion, showing a variant reading of the second line to have been: "Und schätzt' ihn seine eigne Waffe ab!" Werner conjectures that *Waffe* may have been *Wage*. That conjecture fits what seems to be the natural meaning of the two lines under discussion. Sameas, who is trying to give a vivid picture of the richness of Herod's tribute to Rome, says: "It would be enough to pay for Caesar, at Caesar's own valuation before his death." "Before his death" is added as a further, too fine, pointing of a not particularly happy thought.

Besides the passages mentioned, I have, without making a line-for-line comparison, noticed slight errors in the following places: ll. 509, 740, 925, 1518, 1630-32, 1910, 2998, and, I believe, 2256. There are not enough inaccuracies seriously to impair the value of the work. All in all, the English reader may approach these translations with confidence, sure of finding not only the words and thought, but the atmosphere and character of the original.

The translation of *Maria Magdalena* is done in vigorous and idiomatic prose, and, so far as I observed, with a very high degree of accuracy. Mr. Allen's Introduction to the volume furnishes a brief but admirable survey of Hebbel's personality and work.

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Elementary French Grammar (Grammaire Française Élémentaire). By EVERETT WARD OLMSTED. New York, Holt and Company [1915]. Pp. iii-v, Preface; pp. 1-217, forty-three "Lessons"; pp. 219-338, tables of verbs, four pp. of phonetic transcriptions, two vocabularies, and an index.

From Mr. Olmsted's Preface: [1] "The aim of this book is to offer a thorough and practical

course in French that shall combine the best features of both the so-called 'grammatical' and 'direct' methods of instruction." . . . [2] "Every lesson contains a reading exercise of connected prose. These exercises present topics of general, practical interest in the early part of the book, and in the latter part are devoted more particularly to French life and culture [a distinction which this reviewer fails to grasp]. The aim has been to introduce a thoroughly French atmosphere, and such subjects as the arrival in Paris, the choice of an apartment, sight-seeing in Paris, the history of the city, French education, Parisian theaters and cafés, etc. [cf. *Le Petit Parisien*], have been chosen with that end in view. Some of the information given may be of value to future travelers." (Here attention is called to "an exceedingly brief, but useful résumé of French literature" in lessons XXXVIII-XL.) [3] "If used with judgment, this grammar is appropriate to all sorts of beginners, those in the high-schools as well as those in the colleges. However, in those preparatory schools where the teacher may prefer to begin with a *very elementary method*, this grammar will be found ideal for the review work of the second year." Then [4]: "The introduction contains the most complete presentation of the phonetic symbols to be found in any similar text-book, and many teachers will welcome this aid." (Mr. O. explicitly acknowledges indebtedness to Brachet and Dussouchet, and to Fraser and Squair's larger *French Grammar*.)

GENERALITIES

To consider a typical "lesson," Mr. O. gives a Vocabulary, states a few principles of syntax, inserts a Reading Exercise (usually of his own composing), a Grammatical Drill, a Conversation, Composition (English to French), and an Oral Exercise (in English). The sentences to be translated are brief, for the most part simple, generally relevant, and seldom of the Ollendorffian sort or otherwise too characteristic of "grammars." I say "seldom" because occasionally (perhaps purposely) Mr. O. writes very French-like English and sometimes he inserts sentences which leave a good deal to be desired from various points of view.

For example: P. 51: ". . . qui commence par ('by') une voyelle" . . . P. 74: "*le pantalon* . . . the pantaloons." P. 87: "The interesting little blue book on his desk